

Message Text

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12
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AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 4 DACCA 0191

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

10. THE ROLE OF THE JSD: IT SEEMS TO US THAT THE JSD
PLAYED NO MORE THAN A CATALYTIC ROLE AT BEST IN THE
SEPOY MUTINY. HOWEVER, IF THE JSD DOES NOT DESERVE
THE KIND OF CREDIT IT HAS CLAIMED FOR ITSELF, ITS REVO-
LUTIONARY RHETORIC IN COMBINATION WITH THE FACT THAT THE
SEPOYS DID INDEED REVOLT NEVERTHELESS SERVED TO THOROUGH-
LY FRIGHTEN JUST ABOUT EVERYONE. AS IT HAS DONE IN ITS
PAST BRIEF LIFE, THE JSD -- UNABLE TO EXERCISE SUFFICIENT
SELF-DISCIPLINE TO BUILD ON ITS GAINS -- WENT TOO FAR IN
CHALLENGING AUTHORITY, PROCLAIMING A CONFRONTATION IT
WAS TOO WEAK TO MAINTAIN; ATTEMPTS TO BACK OFF FROM
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ITS INFLAMMATORY POSITION CAME TOO LATE. THE PUBLIC,
FRIGHTENED BY THE KILLINGS OF OFFICERS, THE RADICAL
RHETORIC, AND PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT JSD WERE REALLY
PRO-INDIAN AGITATORS AND AWARE OF THE PARTY'S WEAKNESS,

TURNED AGAINST THE JSD, THUS SIMPLIFYING AN ARMY CRACK-DOWN ON THEM. THE SUICIDAL EFFORT TO CAPTURE THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER ONLY TERRIFIED THE BANGALEES ALL THE MORE, PROVOKING AS IT DID A VERY REAL RISK OF INDIAN RETALIATION.

1. THE FEARFUL AND ANTIPATHETIC RESPONSE TO THE JSD AND TO THE JAWAN'S RAMPAGE INDICATE THAT THE BANGALEES DO NOT WANT REVOLUTION; THEY WANT AUTHORITY AND STABILITY. (THE DISILLUSION WITH MUJIB'S RULE, WE THINK, RESULTED MORE FROM HIS FAILURE TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER AND IMPROVE THE MATERIAL ASPECT OF LIFE THAN IT DID FROM HIS ASSUMPTION OF ABSOLUTE POWERS.) THERE HAS BEEN TOO MUCH CHAOS IN THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF EAST BENGAL TO PERMIT MUCH ENTHUSIASM FOR EXPERIMENTATION AND UPHEAVALS IN STRUCTURES OF AUTHORITY. THE BANGALEES SEEM AWARE OF AN ANARCHIC STREAK IN THEIR OWN CHARACTER AND SPEAK OF THE NEED FOR A BENIGN AUTHORITY TO CURB THEIR OWN INDISCIPLINE.

V. THE MILITARY FORCED TO THE FRONT.

12. KHALED MOSHARRAF'S COUP AND THE SUBSEQUENT COUNTERCOUP FORCED THE MILITARY TO TAKE EFFECTIVE CONTROL IN BANGLADESH. THEY COULD NO LONGER CLAIM AS THEY HAD IN THE POST-AUGUST 15 PERIOD THAT THE "MAJORS" EFFORT WAS NOT A MILITARY COUP D'ETAT BUT AN ABERRATION THAT THEY HAD TO ACCEPT AS A FAIT ACCOMPLI. THE MILITARY HAD, IN THE AUGUST 15-NOVEMBER 3 PERIOD, DISPLAYED SUBSTANTIAL AMBIVALENCE TOWARD THE ASSUMPTION OF A CENTRAL ROLE IN GOVERNMENT, AWARE OF ITS OWN WEAKNESS ORGANIZATIONALLY AND MATERIALLY. AFTER THE FIRST WEEK OF NOVEMBER IT COULD NO LONGER ESCAPE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DETERMINING THE FATE OF THE COUNTRY.

13. THE EVENTS OF NOVEMBER DID REMOVE CERTAIN ANOMALIES THAT HAD MADE BANGALEES UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE MARTIAL LAW REGIME A LA MOSHTAQ. HIS GOVERNMENT CLEARLY
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RESTED UPON ITS MARTIAL LAW JUSTIFICATION, YET IT SOUGHT TO MAINTAIN THE FACADE AND THE STRUCTURE OF A CONSTITUTIONALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT. ONCE MOSHTAQ WAS FORCED INTO RESIGNING, A MORE TRADITIONAL MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION TOOK FORM WHICH APPEARS TO BE MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE PUBLIC AS REFLECTIVE OF THE REAL LOCUS OF POWER IN THE COUNTRY.

14. IF THE PUBLIC SEES MILITARY RULE AS THE FUNCTIONING OF REALPOLITIK IN BANGLADESH TODAY, THERE IS ALSO THE VIEW THAT THE MILITARY OUGHT PROPERLY TO BE MORE CAPABLE OF RUNNING THE COUNTRY. TRADITIONALLY IN THE SUBCONTINENT THE ARMY HAS BEEN SEEN AS THE ARM OF AUTHORITY, AND

BANGALEES HAVE DEVELOPED A YEARNING FOR FIRM, NO-NONSENSE ADMINISTRATION. ALTHOUGH IN PAKISTAN TIMES, THE ARMY WAS SELDOM A NON-POLITICAL FORCE, IT WAS AT LEAST SEEN MUCH OF THE TIME TO BE "THE PARTY THAT STANDS ABOVE PARTY", TRANSCENDING NARROW PARTISAN INTERESTS. THIS VIEW OF THE ARMY AS NONPARTISAN HAS BEEN UNDERCUT BY THE PRO- AND ANTI-INDIAN SENTIMENT ASSOCIATED WITH THE COUPS. THE JSD IDENTIFICATION WITH THE MUTINY, AND CONTINUED DISUNITY WITHIN THE MILITARY. NEVERTHELESS, THE MILITARY REMAINS THE LEAST UNDISCIPLINED FORCE IN THE COUNTRY, IN CONTRAST, FOR EXAMPLE, TO THE DEMORALIZED CIVIL SERVICE AND A CORRUPTED POLICE. WHAT BANGALEES NOW FEAR IS NOT THAT THE ARMY WILL NOT CARRY OUT ITS DUTIES ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS BUT THAT ANOTHER CONFRONTATION WITHIN THE MILITARY MAY DEVELOP THAT WOULD DESTROY ITS ABILITY TO RULE AT ALL.

15. THIS DESIRE OF THE BANGALEES FOR NONPARTISANSHIP REFLECTED ITS EXPERIENCES OF LATE. FOR ALL THE ATTENTION FOCUSED ON THE POPULAR "REVOLUTION" OF NOVEMBER 7, THE ENTHUSIASMS OF THAT DAY VERY QUICKLY SUBSIDED. RATHER, BANGALEES HAVE TENDED TO SHY AWAY FROM POLITICS SINCE AUGUST 15, SPEEDING A TREND WHICH BEGAN EARLY IN THE MUJIB ERA. THEY HAVE TROUBLE SEEING THAT THERE IS ANY STAKE FOR THEM, NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEIR OWN LIVES ARE AFFECTED IN CONSEQUENCE, IN BACKING OR OPPOSING THE RULES OF THE MOMENT. THERE HAS BEEN NO TRULY CONFIDENTIAL

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NATIONAL MOVEMENT SINCE THE AWAMI LEAGUE'S SIX POINT PROGRAM FOR AUTONOMY.

VI. THE MLA AND NATIONAL STABILITY

16. THE ONLY PROMISE THAT THE MARTIAL LAW REGIME HAS MADE TO THE PEOPLE IS TO HOLD NATIONAL ELECTIONS BY THE END OF FEBRILY 1977. OTHERWISE IT HAS EXHORTED THE PEOPLE TO WORK HARD TO BUILD THE ECONOMY IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST AND TO RESIST INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL THREATS TO NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY. A PRINCIPAL PREOCCUPATION HAS BEEN MAINTIANING INTERNAL SECURITY LEST UNREST TEMPT INDIAN INTERFERENCE, AND THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN CONSEQUENCE APPEARS TO HAVE IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY. ON THE POLICY LEVEL, IT HAS MADE SOME WELCOME ECONOMIC DECISIONS (SEE ECONOMIC REVIEW IN DACCA 0008). HOWEVER, THERE ARE LIMITES UPON THE MLA'S ABILITY TO GOVERN EFFECTIVELY AND TO INSTILL CONFIDENCE AMONG BANGALEES.
-- MOST BANGALEES SEEM TO WISH THE MLA WELL AND APPROVE OF MOST DECISIONS IT HAS TAKEN. BUT THE CONTINUED REPORTS OF FACTIONALISM AMONG REPATRIATE AND LIBERA-

TION-WAR OFFICERS AND THE DEMANDS OF THE RANKS IN
THE MILITARY PREVENT THE BANGLADEES FROM HAVING FULL
CONFIDENCE IN THE MLA. THERE IS THE RELUCTANTLY
HELD BELIEF THAT ANOTHER COUP OR REVOLT IS POSSIBLE
AT ANY TIME. THE MILITARY MAY CONTINUE TO BE RES-
PECTED AS THE LOCUS OF POWER BUT IT NO LONGER HAS
THE TRUST OF THE PEOPLE THAT IT CAN REGULATE ITSELF.
-- THE MLA HAS STRESSED THAT IT WILL DECENTRALIZE
DECISION MAKING IN ORDER TO EXPEDITE PROJECT IMPLI-
MENTATION. HOWEVER, THE BATTERED BUREAUCRACY IN
BANGLADESH IS SHOWING LESS INCLINATION THAN EVER TO
ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY. THE SEVERAL FALSE STARTS
OF THE MLA IN STAFFING THE ADMINISTRATION AT THE TOP
HAS LENT IT AN AIR OF AD HOC GOVERNANCE, AND HAS
RESULTED IN CIVIL SERVANTS AT ALL LEVELS BEING MORE
THAN EVER HESITANT TO TAKE ACTION WITHOUT CLEAR
DIRECTIVES. MOREOVER, AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL,
CLEAR DECISIONS AND ACTIONS ARE TAKEN ONLY AT THE
INSTIGATION OF OR WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL
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ZIA. ZIA IS THE MAN WITH THE POWER AND NO ONE WANTS
TO RUN AFOUL OF HIM.

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